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## CHAPTER RIDER EDUCATOR

### WHEEL TRAPS

We've all seen them. The most common is the new lane of pavement on one side and the roto-milled lane that you're in. Sometimes it's the curb as you turn into a parking lot. Your choices are limited, either you stay where you are, or you try to ride over it.

The problem is that if you get too close to the trap you cannot simply turn your wheel and exit the obstacle. Any effort to turn away from the curb that your front tire is hugging finds that the rear edge of the tire must push against the curb in order for the front edge to turn away. A mere 1 inch of height is sufficient to stop you cold. Your bike can fall over before you can turn the wheel out of the trap. In this particular case you have no choice but to stop the bike, if you can, and walk the bike free. Here are some suggestions for you when you encounter such traps.

**Never get within 6" of a raised surface that runs parallel to the direction you are moving.**

For anything greater than about one inch you must put as great an angle of attack to it as possible. Ideally you want to cross it at a 90 degree angle. It's desirable but not always practical. Many times I have felt "lane-locked" by uneven lanes of pavement and resurfacing projects. At times it's better to stay locked in on the roto-mill side than to try to jump over the 3" lift of new pavement, especially at highway speed.

**Always approach a trap you must cross over with more than a 20 degree attack angle.**

Believe it or not, it's not so much about your front tire getting over the trap, but rather getting your rear tire over the trap. If the rear tire locks on the trap, the angle of attack becomes greater, you instinctively turn into the direction of travel and when the rear tire cuts loose, you have the makings of a very unpleasant high-side accident.

**Before trying to ride over a trap that is relatively close to you, turn away from it and then towards it in order to build the largest angle of attack possible.**

An instant before your front tire hits the obstacle, accelerate. That unloads your front shocks. At the same time shift your weight to your pegs and lift your posterior off the seat. When the rear tire hits the trap, the rear end of the bike will get a vertical jolt, enough that you don't want to be thrown off your seat or fight for control if you are not prepared.

As agile as we know our motorcycles are, there are times when two wheels are simply not up to the tasks we present them -- unless we know how.

*Think Safety. Ride Safely*  
*Jim and Linda*